1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Even in cases of illegitimacy, if the mother comes to marry another man than her child's father, a match may sometimes save the day. It serves the social purposes and repairs the damage, though it removes none of the stain upon one's local reputation. In spite of the strictness of country standards, many small farmers have married "poor, unfortunate girls" of this kind, without irreparable loss of respectability. Yet even then the attitude of the community fits the familistic norm. Such cases are felt to be very unusual and special departures from custom. They are matters for some surprise and congratulation.

The moral standards of the countryside involve a most strict control of the young people in sexual matters. Premarital virginity is the ideal. It is a double standard, of course. The young lads are not, or were not until recently, expected to be so pure as the girls.

The sexual urges of the older people are deemed adequately satisfied in marriage. Adultery very seldom seems to come into the reckoning of the small farmers. This is part of the equation of sexual appetite and familistic aspirations. The country people know something of town prostitutes and have heard of occasional marital lapses in the countryside as well. But these matters are not of great interest. The incidents, as far as one can judge, are of infrequent occurrence. Marital fidelity is not only the ideal; it seems to be the fact as well. It seems even to be taken for granted, and any other course felt inconceivable.

Thus we must look to the relations among the unmarried young couples to see the chief point of pressure in the rural system of values. That is the area in which there is nearly all the smoke and not a little fire.

Although premarital virginity and complete abstinence from any kind of sexual activity is the ideal for the young, local custom emphasizes marriage all the while. Local dances and other festivities are the chief times of meeting

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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834 violent disturbance in the relations uniting others to themselves and to one another. To "destroy a girl's character" 183 in the countryside is to upset the pattern of family and com- 554 munity life by overthrowing the possibility of an orderly change in farm succession. Much more than a shooting or a fight, a sexual irregularity, which cannot be righted in a match, is capable of destroying the intricate mutual obligations and expectancies of rural familism.

For the family whose "name" is "destroyed" and whose hopes of orderly re-formation are upset, two courses are open. One is to patch up a compromise, to accept the match [626] forced upon them. The other is to expel the offenders bodily. Community feeling gives full support. In either case the girl concerned can no longer hope for full status. If the match is made or another husband found to father a child, time may right matters and give her full adult status as a farm wife and mother. Her failure as a girl may be forgotten, but it was a failure still. Otherwise there is little further to do but suffer expulsion. Emigration has been the refuge till recently.

836 The country people's attitudes toward illegitimacy and premarital intercourse, one and the same to them, reflect ●848 well the disturbances they occasion. In discussing a local 626 case, one woman could voice the community's opinion in the following general terms:

> A young lady with a good fortune even, she couldn't get any man because her character is broken. Unless maybe he is very low. And so she usually goes to America and passes for a maiden. Everyone knows the father of the child but, if he has a good farm of land, no one would say anything, but he would be unlucky and have no family. He would get another woman [a wife, that is] with no bother. The baby might be sent to a home. And after a time they bring it home as a cousin.

836 But it is not always that the boys are treated so leniently, 626 and they, too, must emigrate, driven off by public censure.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

Begging is practically unknown, and drunkenness, as a habit, does not exist, the sobriety being very noticeable on holidays, though occasional bouts of drinking are sometimes indulged in when a good take of fish has been made. They are very conscientious in their religious observances, and depend greatly on the advice and control of their clergy, with regard to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Sexual irregularities are extremely rare, no case of illegitimacy having been recorded from the islands for years.

As fishermen they are brave, hardy, and extremely venturesome; this applies especially to the men of Inishshark, who are reputed in Bofin to be the best and most daring boatmen on the west coast.

Quarrels often occur, but a regular stand-up fight appears to be unknown, the men usually contenting themselves with abusive language, or at most a sudden blow or stone-throwing. A woman when angered may use very abusive language towards a man, as she would be practically safe from any fear of physical violence on his part, even when she was very provoking.

On the other hand, they are not without faults. In their ordinary life they are thriftless, and not too cleanly in many of their habits, and have but little regard for ordinary sanitary laws; their veracity, too, is not altogether unimpeachable, while the people of the mainland allege that they have a very strong aversion to the payment of debts, rent, and cess, for the last-named of which they owe over £1300.

The habits and manners of the people of Shark are much the same as those described above. The people are noted for their loyalty to one another; they never tell any stranger anything about their local affairs. They are kindly and civil to visitors, always crowding down to assist them on landing, but are said to be capable of acts of ferocity when roused.

5. *Folk-names.*—The following list of fifty-one surnames comprises all those now to be met with on the islands. Some of these names, however, are those of families not long established on the islands, while others, formerly common, as Gorham and Halligan, are now without representatives.

The Gorhams are still, to some extent, connected with Inishbofin, as one of them is proprietor of the only shop there worth the name, and in addition holds a farm, but he lives on the mainland, and manages them by deputy, only occasionally visiting the place himself. It is possible that, owing to the heavy emigration, other surnames may also have disappeared. In the list of surnames given in the

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

mentions that at one time the people of Inishkea were much noted for it, and that the fate of the two men, who some time in the last century ruined themselves in a lawsuit about a sheep, became proverbial, and litigants were warned to remember the fate of "Malley and Malone." C. O.[1] also refers to this peculiarity, which nowadays seems to be more characteristic of the mainland people than the islanders. 691

In the course of the cases arising from this tendency, many curious examples of ingenious cross-swearing occur. Intoxication is rather prevalent on fair days and holidays, and at weddings and other festive occasions, but at ordinary times there is not much of it among the country people. They appear to be conscientious in their religious observances, and depend much on the guidance and advice of their clergy. 181 [273] [771]

As will be judged from the extent and variety of their folk-lore, they have a great love for the supernatural and mystical. [789]

As regards morals, though illegitimacy is by no means unknown, yet, when the size of the population is taken into account, it is so rare as to be very creditable to the moral tone of the people.[2] [848]

A stand-up fight rarely occurs when men quarrel, there may be one or two blows struck, or stone-throwing may be indulged in, but disputes do not usually get beyond cursing and vituperation. [578]

As parents they are affectionate, but careless and unequal in their treatment of their children, at one time over indulging them, and at another punishing severely for a slight fault. [855]

With regard to industry, but little can be said in their favour, though energetic by starts, during which they are capable of a great deal of work, accounts agree in stating that they dislike steady occupation, and are indolent. It should be remembered, however, that there has hitherto been but little inducement to them to cultivate steady industry. The women seem always to have plenty of work on hand, and to do it. 461 181

In this district, as in many others, the people are not very careful in their re-payment of debts, and shopkeepers do not now give credit to the same extent as formerly. As to rent and cess, to the payment of these, too, a strong aversion is often manifested. 181 426

Many of their habits are not over cleanly, though this is largely due to the wretched nature of their houses, and a strict regard for truth is not a prominent part of their character. 181 515 577

[1] "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawley."

[2] The total number of cases which occurred between the years 1884 and 1893 was 18.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

Low stools and benches seem to have been the traditional form of seating, and no doubt the floor served for the children. Travellers noted that this was the best way to avoid the smoke: 352

> By sitting low, on rushes spread,
> The smoke still hover'd overhead;
> And did more good than real harm,
> Because it kept the long house warm.[1]

Fireside seats, more or less fixed, were often of stone, a solid block of wood or a large lump of turf. In the 'round about' hearths which were common in parts of Co. Antrim, and which people who remember them have described to me, the seat behind the fire, a log of wood, was known as the dais, a dialect word for a bench or seat which appears to be of north English origin. Solid seats of coiled straw or rushes were also common (Fig. 29) but the favourite fireside stool was the three-legged creepie, resembling a milking stool and like it finding a firm hold no matter how uneven the floor. There is little evidence of chairs of any antiquity. A three-legged type found in parts of the west, with a triangular seat and a narrow one-piece back has probably evolved from the creepie but looks Germanic. The nearest approach to a distinctive Irish style is the straw or rush-seated chair, which finds its best-known homes in Co. Down and Co. Limerick. High-backed armchairs made entirely of coiled straw rope after the manner of a beehive used to be found in the west, and since they can be paralleled in many parts of western Europe from the Orkneys to Spain it is probable that their manufacture is a peasant craft of some antiquity (Fig. 29). Cradles, too, were made of straw as well as of wood and basketwork, and they were sometimes suspended from the roof. I have heard of a cradle being improvised by laying a horse-collar on the floor. The phrase 'rocked in a pot' applied to an illegitimate child is said to derive from the use of a large fireside cooking pot as cradle and hiding place: round-shouldered infants were therefore suspect. [854] [848]

Down to recent times it was the custom to keep most of the dairying equipment in the kitchen, and in the traditional peasant house the upright churn still occupies a place against the wall, 234 353

[1] W(illiam) M(offatt), *The Western Isle* (1724), Canto 2. [Text continues on p. 95]